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From Blue Mills to Columbia: Cedar Falls and the Civil War

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the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 provoked among German Americans an even more deeply rooted fear and opposition than among the native-born population of the North. Before 1854 Germans had found a natural home in the Democratic Party, with its open arms for immigrants and greater tolerance for diversity. But Kansas-Nebraska propelled the Germans into the embrace of the new Republican Party in 1856 despite that party's somewhat uncomfortable associations with the nativism of the old Whigs and Know Nothings. The Germans, in their devotion to Free Soil and hostility to slavery, a legacy of 1848, found common cause with native-born working men and women of the East and farmers of Iowa and the Middle West, and a common home in the Republican Party. Levine carefully attends to reactions in both regions and to the largely unsuccessful efforts of Democrats nationwide to retain their hold on German voters.

The new political history of the past twenty years has paid special attention to shifting electoral coalitions in American politics—the "critical elections" thesis. Levine has shown more carefully than anyone else how and why the Germans found their way into the Republican Party. On the other hand, he uses none of the quantitative election analysis that might cinch his case for changing German-American electoral behavior. Otherwise exhaustively researched and reasonably well written, the book relies inevitably on newspaper accounts. Descriptions of political meetings drawn from the ethnic and mainstream press that drag on for pages could have been summarized on the readers' behalf. Too often Levine succumbs to the dissertation writer's temptation to give ten quotations or examples when two or three would have sufficed nicely.

Bruce Levine's study joins two other fine recent works, Stanley Nadel's *Little Germany* and Walter Kamphoefner's *The Westfalians* in the growing literature of America's, and Iowa's, largest immigrant community, the German Americans.

From Blue Mills to Columbia: Cedar Falls and the Civil War, by Kenneth L. Lyftogt. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993. vii, 191 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$23.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY M. PHILIP LUCAS, CORNELL COLLEGE

Three major sets of actors dominate Kenneth Lyftogt's study of Cedar Falls during the Civil War. The Pioneer Greys, a company of young men from the town, enlisted in the spring of 1861. A second company, the Cedar Falls Reserves, enlisted in mid-1862 and, like the Greys, fought until the end of the war. The third set of participants is the

people of Cedar Falls who supported the war effort in various ways as they anxiously awaited news from the front lines.

Lyftogt relied heavily on soldiers' letters published in the *Cedar Falls Gazette*. The letters document the attitudes and activities of the Pioneer Greys and the Reserves in numerous campaigns. The Greys first saw duty guarding railroads in war-torn Missouri. They and the rest of the Third Iowa Infantry Regiment joined Grant before the battle of Shiloh. The Cedar Falls Reserves and the remainder of the Thirty-first Iowa Regiment first fought in the campaigns to capture Vicksburg. Both Cedar Falls companies participated in nearly every major movement led by Grant and Sherman in the western theater. The Pioneer Greys were badly battered in Sherman's attack on Jackson, Mississippi, on July 12, 1863, and were almost completely destroyed outside Atlanta a year later. The Cedar Falls Reserves suffered casualties in the assaults on Vicksburg, at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, and throughout Sherman's campaign through northern Georgia. In a sad irony, each company lost an original enlistee just days before the war ended.

Lyftogt also uses the *Cedar Falls Gazette* and other sources to depict life in Cedar Falls during the war. Located at the terminus of the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad, the town prospered. Population and business enterprises grew throughout the war. Cedar Falls also developed a well-deserved political reputation as staunchly Republican and intolerant of dissent against the Lincoln administration as evidenced by mob actions against avowed Peace Democrats. At the same time, Cedar Falls's residents and soldiers, like many other Iowans, held ambivalent attitudes toward African Americans in Iowa and the South. Women relief workers diligently sent food and clothing to Cedar Falls's soldiers, and collected food and money to assist the families whose husbands and sons were off fighting. Lyftogt provides a good description of both the celebration that followed Lee's surrender and the calls for revenge evoked by Lincoln's assassination.

Casual readers and those interested in Cedar Falls history will find this a fast-paced, well-written work. Civil War buffs will appreciate the evidence from the Cedar Falls newspaper, but will see some limitations. The summary of the war is uneven and simplistic. Too often the Cedar Falls troops get lost in the movement of their regiments and the armies. There is not much use of the published *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* or service records and other sources at the National Archives. The 1860 census, pension records, and local records might have helped readers understand better who these soldiers and their families were. The local history approach to the Civil War has considerable merit, as it reveals dimensions of the period unavailable in purely military history. Unfortunately, important in-

sights into the composition of the Pioneer Greys and Reserves and their relationship to the Cedar Falls community are possibly neglected here. Yet readers interested in Iowa history will find this a useful introduction to the complexities of civilian and military life in the Civil War era.

Keepers of the Flame: The Role of Fire in American Culture, 1775-1925, by Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. x, 281 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MAUREEN OGLE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Contemporary Americans rarely think of fire as anything more than a potential hazard. As Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen point out in their encyclopedic but engaging and useful survey of Americans and fire, that has not always been the case; indeed, for much of the nation's history, fire in all of its manifestations served variously as the constant companion, helpmate, friend, and, at times, enemy of people of all ages. Starting with the assertion that prior to 1925 fire was "a powerful leveler" and "a perpetual fact of life" (6), the Hazens survey the multiples uses and forms of fire and heat. They examine, for example, fireplaces, furnaces, and stoves, contemporaries' scientific understanding of fire, the making and "keeping" of fire, fire as special effect, fire as entertainment, firemen and their culture, fire in painting and song, and a multitude of inventions designed to make fire easier and safer to use, inventions that had the effect of "insulating" users from the heat and danger of fire itself.

The strength of this book lies in its informative detail, gleaned from an enormous variety of sources, most of them secondary. In particular, scholars and general readers interested in American domestic life before 1925 will learn much from this book. Especially useful are its discussions of how Americans used fire and fire-related technologies in their everyday lives and its explanations of Americans' changing understanding of fire as a scientific phenomenon. Nineteenth-century firemen and fire fighting are given their due, as is that great urban hero Mose, the Bowery B'hoy. Indeed, there is a wealth of information packed into these pages, all of it presented in clear, engaging prose and illustrated by reproductions of lithographs, trade cards, stereographs, and paintings.

What the book lacks is any substantive analysis, an omission the Hazens justify at the outset by explaining that they deliberately sought

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